SUBMISSION FROM ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

1. RTPI Scotland is pleased to be able to provide written evidence to the Committee on Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2013 -14, especially given the request to focus on key issues for regeneration.

2. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. A charity registered in Scotland and England and Wales it works to promote the art and science of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,200 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of nearly 23,000. We:
   - support policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public
   - maintain the professional standards of our members
   - support our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively
   - maintain high standards of planning education
   - develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning
   - support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland
   - improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.

3. It is essential that Scottish Government continues to promote and support regeneration in the future. We recognise the tight fiscal circumstances that Government has to work in, and feel that, given this, regeneration should be seen as a priority in allocation of resources. Regeneration is an essential contributor to economic growth, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

4. In doing this Scottish Government has several roles to play including:
   - **Resource provider**: Despite the move towards innovative funding approaches which depend more on loans, guarantees and the like, there will still be a need for Scottish Government to provide grant funding given that much regeneration activity works within the context of ‘market failure’.
   - **Broker/ Champion**: Scottish Government must show its commitment to regeneration in its actions and in its resource allocation. Regeneration demands a range of players to come together to make a difference and so Scottish Government must champion and broker this, both internally across the Civil Service, and externally across the sectors, organisations and disciplines involved.
   - **Knowledge and expertise hub**: Scottish Government should continue its role in supporting the different sectors, organisations and disciplines to identify, share and apply good practice and innovation.
• **Innovator:** Scottish Government must invest in new ways of working and in supporting research and scoping which identify and test alternative approaches to tackling regeneration issues. In doing this it needs to work with practitioners and intermediary organisations to ensure that these new ways are useful and deliverable.

5. The Institute believes that planners, planning and the planning system can have an important role in supporting sustainable changes to help regenerate communities. A properly resourced planning system, working within the correct framework, is key to achieving ambitions for sustainable development, including economic growth and successful places for people across Scotland. A properly resourced planning system can highlight pressures for change, identify opportunities and build appropriate safeguards: it can provide the long term, pro-active vision for Scotland through integrating and future-proofing development: and it can allow people across Scotland to have a say in the future of the places, old and new, where they live, work and relax.

6. Planning is all about improving the quality of life for people and communities. It is therefore a key player in regeneration. Given this, we need to build upon the significant change and progress that has been made to planning over the last few years, and to ensure that planning and regeneration strategies are linked. This will call for more confident planning and more confidence in planning as a means of achieving a range of outcomes, including regeneration. This requires political commitment, professional excellence and effective community engagement. If planning is given the political support it needs and deserves, planners and politicians will be better placed to deliver the spatial context for a sustainable, forward-looking Scotland, a key component of which will be successful regeneration.

7. The Institute believes that there are four cornerstones of planning that can help to achieve Scottish Government’s regeneration objectives.

8. Firstly, there is the need to ensure that the planning system has a central role in providing visionary, integrated, cost saving and democratic approaches to shaping the future of Scotland. The planning system should be used as a key mechanism to achieve the ambitions of Scotland’s people and communities through setting out a long term vision for the future of Scotland. It can help to improve links between planning and key programmes for regeneration, infrastructure, economic development, housing, transport and rural development through Single Outcome Agreements and Community Planning. Given this, policy and investment decisions should recognise that good planning involves ‘early intervention’, a key contribution to regeneration and one which will save costs in the long term by anticipating future issues. It can, therefore, be a key contributor to regeneration.

9. Secondly, there is a need to recognise that the planning system has an important role in helping to deliver outcomes such as sustainable development, economic growth and successful places which lead to the regeneration of communities. These
'end products' are what planning is for. Given this, there is a need to recognise the role it can play in achieving sustainable development – for example, the RTPI’s 7 Commitments on Climate Change show how the planning system can help achieve climate change targets, develop renewables and build sustainable communities. The planning system can also be used to promote and deliver economic growth. Planning can provide for employment opportunities, allocate land for housing, take a holistic approach to town centre regeneration and promote economic development. In doing all of this there is a need to ensure that the value of successful places is recognised in policy and investment decisions, to tie in planning with the development of new mechanisms and approaches to the provision of resources to deliver infrastructure, (especially where public sector agencies can make best use of public land and property assets) and how better to phase development finance and return. Given this, there may be an opportunity to explore potential new tools, powers, incentives and interventions that allow planners proactively to support development, regeneration and economic growth.

10. Thirdly, there is a need to provide the correct frameworks for planning at national, regional, local and community levels to help deliver sustainable change. The planning framework, having undergone significant change recently, needs to bed down. But it can positively and pro-actively influence the development sector to deliver sustainable development, economic growth and better places.

11. Given this, there is a need to ensure that any future regeneration strategy is linked into the development of the 3rd National Planning Framework. Future regeneration strategies must also be aligned with guidance, advice and interventions on planning from Scottish Government. These should provide direction whilst allowing local planning authorities to make decisions based on their needs and circumstances.

12. Regeneration must recognise, and must be recognised in, the Development Plan-led system through visionary Strategic and Local Development Plans, (with any associated Supplementary Guidance), as these provide the framework for delivering sustainable change. It must also be recognised that the planning system is a means of engaging communities effectively, especially through early participation in the Development Plan process, and through the Neighbour Notification process for planning applications (Development Management). Scottish Government should therefore commit to continue to resource Planning Aid for Scotland in its delivery of advice, training, mentoring and education programmes through its professional volunteers and staff. However, there is a need to ensure that planning decisions, including those affecting regeneration, are taken at a level where professionally qualified planners can use their expertise to frame recommendations that balance local and strategic needs as well as short- and long-term issues.

13. Lastly, there is a need to provide adequate resources to deliver good planning and to ensure that we have a skilled and experienced workforce now and in the future. We have a planning workforce in Scotland which has a wealth of experience and expertise in regeneration. We need to ensure we don’t lose this expertise and
experience currently, and that we support the planning workforce in building on this, to help bring forward new, innovative approaches to regeneration. Given this, Scottish Government needs to continue to support those working in regeneration to improve their effectiveness, learning from success and investing in research and analysis to ensure practitioners, policy-makers and communities have a better understanding of the challenges and potential solutions to be faced in the future.

14. Given this, we are disappointed that the proposed budget for Planning functions within Scottish Government is to drop from £3.8m in 2012/13 to £3.6m in 2013/14 and £3.5m in 2014/15.

15. We would be happy to expand on, or clarify any of these comments.

Craig McLaren
National Director
Royal Town Planning Institute